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Information Bulletin

*Grade 9 English Language Arts
1994-97*

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

This bulletin contains general information about the Achievement Testing Program and information specific to the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Additional copies of the bulletin may be made as needed.

DISTRIBUTION: Superintendents of Schools • School Principals and Teachers • The Alberta Teachers' Association • Alberta School Boards Association • Officials of Alberta Education • General Public upon Request.

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General Information

The Achievement Testing Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special-needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*, which has been mailed to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts must be administered during the first week of June. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests must be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the test on the same day. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period, schools can ensure that most, if not all, absentees are tested. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

Beginning in 1995, the tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Français 6^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Français 9^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Students in French Language Programs

Beginning in June 1995, all students in Francophone and French Immersion programs must write the French form of the achievement tests. Alberta Education will send enrollment forms to schools by February requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-March.

Reporting the Results

Each school jurisdiction will receive a district report and school reports for their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staffs (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Individual student profiles will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We also expect that these reports will be shared with parents.

Provincial results will be made public in September. A detailed *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report* is published annually.

Broadened Assessment Initiatives

The Student Evaluation Branch has developed additional instruments to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests themselves can provide. These instruments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis:

Grade 3

- 1995 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1996 •problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1998 •problem-solving activities in mathematics

Grade 6

- 1995 •problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1996 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1997 •problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1998 •performance tasks in science

Grade 9

- 1995 •problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1996 •problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 •performance tasks in science
- 1998 •performance tasks in language arts

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 9. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 9 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

These statements describe what is expected of Grade 9 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 9 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured. By comparing actual results to expected provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is in fact “good enough.”

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are expected to demonstrate sustained interest in reading, viewing, and listening to relatively short, uncomplicated stories, documentaries, and dramatic works.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to deal with uncomplicated, familiar details and ideas that are directly presented. They should be able to expand in writing the narration of a personal experience and, sometimes, depending on the context, they should be able to elaborate somewhat on their ideas and sustain a topic for several pages of writing using appropriate but conventional details.

These students are expected to organize concrete, factual materials that contain simple ideas. They should be able to understand more complex techniques of literary structure or organization such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, flashback, and comparison and contrast. On occasion, these students are able to apply that knowledge to unfamiliar literature or apply these techniques in their own writing.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to analyze and synthesize ideas in a familiar context when the experience is close in time to their own experiences. The expectation is that, unassisted, these students will be successful with conventional tasks, and with conscious effort and/or assistance, they should be able to complete increasingly complex tasks.

Those students who meet the *acceptable standard* are expected to independently understand, organize, and articulate course-related ideas and concepts in a concrete, direct, personal, and relatively uncomplicated manner. They should be able to read relatively simple, short novels, non-fiction selections, and narrative poems, and then clearly and correctly articulate (orally

and in writing) the main idea, sequence of events, key details, and features of character and form.

Standard of Excellence

The expectation is that students who meet the *standard of excellence* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are confident learners who read widely (mystery, romance, adventure, speculative fiction, poetry) to search for information from text or just for pleasure.

To meet this standard, students are expected to read, write, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. They should be able to deal with abstract and complex details and ideas, and readily take risks with unfamiliar material. They should be able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of sources and appreciate how analysis can deepen their appreciation of the work. These students can be expected to express their analysis through a variety of modes (writing, oral presentation, drawing, dramatization) with pertinent, specific, and imaginative detail.

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to coherently develop and organize more abstract, complex material. They are expected to establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Without teacher assistance, they should be able to identify areas in their own writing that need to be revised and/or elaborated. It is expected that their final products are essentially error free.

These students should be able to demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination when dealing with details and ideas that demand complex thought and understanding.

Grade 9 English Language Arts Assessment

The assessment is composed of two parts:

Part A: Writing consists of one writing assignment designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is time for discussion, planning, drafting, and revising. Additional time of approximately 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading (multiple choice), is designed to be completed in one and one-half hours. However, additional time of approximately 30 minutes, may be provided to allow students time to finish. It consists of 65 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media. *Part B: Reading* has two booklets—one containing reading passages and one containing the test questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use a dictionary and/or thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

Part A: Writing

Part A: Writing consists of a writing assignment to be directed to an audience and related to a selection of literature (fiction, non-fiction, or poetry) provided in the assessment booklet. Students are allowed to choose the format that will best fit their

approach to the assignment (narrative, letter, editorial, or essay).

Part A: Writing of the 1995, 1996, and 1997 English Language Arts Achievement Test will have an accompanying audio tape; therefore, teachers must make arrangements to have a cassette player in the classroom on the day of the test.

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* includes pages labelled Planning and Rough Draft, and Revised Copy. This format is designed to reflect the writing process model.

Although specific marks will not be given for planning and drafting, markers will be advised to take these elements into consideration when scoring student work, especially in cases where students do not have ample time to complete a revised copy.

Important Information to Note!

Students will be given time to discuss the prompt with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about it, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

**Part A: Writing
Blueprint**

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>The student should be able to respond to a selection of literature and communicate that response appropriately to a specified audience.</p>	<p>The writing assignment is a response to a selection of literature provided in the test booklet. The student may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. The assignment allows the student to select the format that would benefit his/her approach to the assignment.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p> <p>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition that achieves the student's purpose for writing.</p>		<p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve the student's purpose.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.</p>		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p> <p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Beginning in June 1995, classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using the scoring guide in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally will be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading.

Discrepancies will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual student results can be reported.

All papers will be marked in Edmonton early in July. Group leaders will meet before the marking session. Markers will be junior high school teachers selected from those whom superintendents have recommended as markers to the Student Evaluation Branch. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 9 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking.

The branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 150 Grade 9 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. Markers will be contacted in May. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process in which some teachers who are selected for marking are asked to make judgements about the achievement test to answer the question of whether province-wide performance is good enough. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*.

Sample Writing Assignment

The sample assignment that follows is similar in format and content to the assignment that will appear on the 1995 and 1996 Grade 9 English Language Arts Part A: *Writing* component. Adequate space for planning, drafting, and revised work will be provided in the writing booklet. This sample assignment is for classroom use.

Grade 9 Achievement Test

English Language Arts

Part A: Writing

To the Teacher

Please read the information on this page to the students.

Description

- In this test, you are asked to listen to a song while you read the lyrics.* This song may provide ideas to help you complete the **Writing Assignment**.
- You have 10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning, and 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete your writing.

Instructions

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates about the writing assignment or to think alone about it.
- You will have an additional 10 minutes to do your planning on your own.
- You may use a non-electronic English language dictionary and a thesaurus.
- Write your ideas on the pages labelled **Planning and Drafting**.
- Write your revised work in **blue** or **black ink** on the pages labelled **Revised Work**.
- Remember that you may make changes and corrections to your revised work.

Evaluation

- Your writing will be evaluated on *what* you say and *how well* you say it (on **Content**, **Organization**, **Sentence Structure**, **Vocabulary**, and **Conventions**).

*For the achievement test, students will be able to listen to the lyrics.

Sample Writing Assignment (continued)

WRITTEN RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

Read the lyrics “Wind Beneath My Wings” and complete the writing assignment that follows.

Wind Beneath My Wings

It must have been cold there in my shadow
Never have sunlight on your face
You were content to let me shine
You always walked a step behind

So I was the one with all the glory
While you were the one with all the strength
A beautiful face without a name for so long
A beautiful smile to hide the pain

Did you ever know that you are my hero?
And everything I would like to be
I can fly higher than an eagle
You are the wind beneath my wings.

It might have appeared to go unnoticed
But I've got it all here in my heart
I want you to know I know the truth, 'cause I know
For I would be nothing without you

Did you ever know that you are my hero?
You are everything I would like to be
I can fly higher than an eagle
You are the wind beneath my wings.

Did I ever tell you you're my hero?
You're everything, everything I would like to be
Oh, I can fly higher than an eagle
For you are the wind beneath my wings.

Sample Writing Assignment (continued)

At some time in their lives, most people have someone whom they admire or try to be like. In these lyrics, the speaker pays tribute to such a person.

Who is your hero? Write about the person or people whose character strengths or personality traits you think are worthy of respect and admiration in today's society.

Your response should be in the form of a narrative, letter, editorial, or essay.

When writing, be sure to:

- Consider** your audience
- Focus** on your purpose
- Organize** your thoughts appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- Budget** your time
- Proofread** and correct your revised work.

Scoring Guide

Reporting Category: Content

When marking **Content** appropriate for Grade Level 9 writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- chooses ideas
- supports the response
- considers the reader

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained.• The ideas used by the writer are carefully chosen and perceptive.• Supporting details are precise and often creative.• Such writing captivates and holds the reader's interest, and may be lively and/or imaginative.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and generally sustained.• The ideas used by the writer are thoughtful.• Supporting details are relevant and specific.• Such writing engages and holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained.• The ideas chosen by the writer are appropriate but conventional.• Supporting details are relevant but general.• Such writing generally holds the reader's interest.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and may not be sustained.• The ideas chosen by the writer are superficial.• Supporting details are scant and/or vague and/or irrelevant.• Such writing does not hold the reader's interest.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writer's purpose may be unclear; if a purpose is stated or implied, it is not sustained.• The ideas chosen by the writer are inappropriate.• Supporting details are irrelevant, inappropriate, and/or lacking.• Such writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Reporting Category: Organization

When marking **Organization** appropriate for Grade Level 9 writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
- coherent order
- connections between events and/or details
- closure

Meets the Standard of Excellence	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The introduction is purposeful and interesting, and it clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is sustained throughout.• Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained.• Transitions, either explicit or implicit, effectively connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs.• Closure is evident and purposeful.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is generally maintained throughout.• Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained.• Transitions, either explicit or implicit, appropriately connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs.• Closure is related to the focus.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The introduction is functional and establishes a focus that may be inconsistently maintained.• Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally.• Transitions may be missing either within sentences and/or between paragraphs.• Closure is mechanical and/or artificial.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The introduction may lack purpose and/or may not be functional; any focus established by the writer may not be maintained.• The arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently.• Transitions, within sentences and/or between paragraphs, are lacking or may be inappropriate.• Closure may be unrelated to the focus.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The introduction, if present, is not functional or is inappropriate; no focus is established.• The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent.• Transitions are rarely used within sentences or between paragraphs.• Closure is inappropriate, unconnected, or missing.
INS	INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Sentence Structure

When marking **Sentence Structure** appropriate for Grade Level 9 writing, the marker should consider

- the degree to which the writer frames grammatically correct sentences
- the effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled.• Sentence type and length are effective and varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is controlled.• Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is generally controlled.• Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, may occasionally impede meaning.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is sometimes lacking control.• Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, often impede meaning.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is generally lacking control.• There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, severely impede meaning.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Vocabulary

When marking **Vocabulary** appropriate for Grade Level 9 writing, the marker should consider

- the effectiveness of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- the accuracy of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the writer's voice/tone

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific words and expressions are carefully selected with an awareness of connotative effect.• Words are used accurately and deliberately to fulfill the purpose.• The writer's voice/tone are confident, appropriate, and enhance the meaning.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and some awareness of connotative effect.• Words are used accurately and often effectively.• The writer's voice/tone are clear and appropriate.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General words and expressions are sometimes used when specific words would have been more effective.• Words are generally used accurately.• The writer's voice/tone are discernible but may be inconsistent or uneven.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General, rather than specific, words predominate.• Specific words, if present, are frequently misused.• The writer's voice/tone are not clearly established or are inappropriate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General words that convey only vague meanings are used.• The writer's voice/tone are not evident.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Conventions

When marking **Conventions** appropriate for Grade Level 9 writing, the marker should consider

- the extent to which the writer has control of mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject-verb/pronoun-antecedent; pronoun reference; etc.)
- clarity of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing is essentially free from errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.• The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing may have minor errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.• Any errors that are present do not reduce the clarity of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing may have occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.• Errors that are present seldom reduce the clarity of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.• Many of these errors reduce the clarity of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that are both noticeable and jarring.• These errors severely reduce the clarity of communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 65 machine-scorable questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

The reading blueprint shows the distribution of the sample questions on the following pages. These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1995, 1996, and 1997 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different.

Development

Reading selections were chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 9 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 9 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

Blueprint for Sample Reading Questions

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to construct meaning by attending to and interpreting ideas/details related to format cues and character (actions, motives, and values), setting, events, and conflict.	6, 7, 12	1	4	33
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to demonstrate an understanding of literary forms as well as an understanding of the relationship of the author's intention and point of view in a reading selection to the choice of form and writing style and to organizational methods such as chronological order, cause/effect, comparison/contrast foreshadowing, and flashback.	11	2, 5, 8	4	33
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of figurative language.	10	4	2	17
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from an entire reading selection.		3, 9	2	17
Total Number of Questions	5	7	12	100
Percent of Test	42	58	100	100

Sample Reading Questions

I. Read the excerpt from “The Portable Phonograph” and answer questions 1 to 5.

THE PORTABLE PHONOGRAPH

The red sunset, with narrow black cloud strips like threats across it, lay on the curved horizon of the prairie. The air was still and cold, and in it settled the mute darkness and greater cold of the night. High in the air there was wind, for through the veil of the dusk the clouds could be seen gliding rapidly south and changing shapes. A queer sensation of torment, of two-sided, unpredictable nature, arose from the stillness of the earth air beneath the violence of the upper air. Out of the sunset, through the dead, matted grass and isolated weed stalks of the prairie, crept the narrow and deeply rutted remains of a road. In the road, in places, there were crusts of shallow, brittle ice. There were little islands of an old oiled pavement in the road too, but most of it was mud, now frozen rigid. The frozen mud still bore the toothed impress of great tanks, and a wanderer on the neighboring undulations might have stumbled, in this light, into large, partially filled-in and weed-grown cavities, their banks channeled and beginning to spread into badlands. These pits were such as might have been made by falling meteors, but they were not. They were the scars of gigantic bombs, their rawness already made a little natural by rain, seed, and time. Along the road there were rakish remnants of fence. There was also, just visible, one portion of tangled and multiple barbed wire still erect, behind which was a shelving ditch with small caves, now very quiet and empty, at intervals in its back wall. Otherwise there was no structure or remnant of a structure visible over the dome of the darkening earth, but only, in sheltered hollows, the darker shadows of young trees trying again.

Walter Van Tilburg Clark

1. As this story begins, the author seems to be creating a certain mood through
 - A. plot
 - B. interesting dialogue
 - C. setting
 - D. characters' figurative language

2. The author implies that, prior to the story, there was a
 - A. drought
 - B. natural disaster
 - C. war
 - D. meteor shower

3. The line(s) that indicate(s) that time has passed is

- A. “the dead, matted grass” (line 6)
- B. “the narrow and deeply rutted remains of a road” (lines 7–8)
- C. “there were rakish remnants of fence” (line 15)
- D. “the darker shadows of young trees trying again” (lines 19–20)

4. The word “scars” in line 14 refers to

- A. visible lines created by old injuries
- B. pits created by explosions
- C. craters made by meteorites
- D. ridges left by passing tanks

5. The type of writing used by this author is

- A. biographical
- B. narrative
- C. expository
- D. descriptive

II. Below are two descriptions of Hawaiian Vacation Packages. Read each of them carefully and answer questions 6 and 7.

Waikiki/ Hilton Hawaiian Village 3 or 7 Nights

From \$160 per person double

Fabulous Waikiki Beach is your headquarters for this exciting tour package and the choice of things to do is strictly up to you. Spend your days sightseeing, shopping, or just relaxing on the warm, sunny beach. Take a stroll at sunset and watch the surrounding hills come alive with tiny pinpoints of light. There's nothing quite like it in all the world.

Package Includes:

- 3 or 7 nights at Hilton Hawaiian Village on Waikiki Beach
- Traditional Hawaiian lei greeting in Honolulu
- Round-trip transfers between airport and hotel
- Porterage of 2 pieces of luggage per person including gratuities
- Rental car for 1 day with unlimited mileage (24 hours per day, 1 car per room) or $\frac{1}{2}$ day city tour (Pick up car at Hilton Hawaiian Village)
- Local host on hand to assist during your stay
- 4% Hawaii State Tax

3/7 Nights—Effective 1/1-12/17/85 ITAA*AHT03/7

Hotel/ Room Grade	No. of Nights	\$Price Per Person		
		Double	Single	Triple
Hilton Hawaiian Village Ocean Tower	3	160.00	285.00	150.00
	7	299.00	570.00	275.00

Extra Nights 39.00 78.00 32.00

Hilton Hawaiian Village Tapa Tower	3	195.00	350.00	170.00	\$ Price Per Person		
					Double	Single	Extra Nights
	7	390.00	725.00	315.00			

Extra Nights 52.00 104.00 40.00

Hilton Hawaiian Village Rainbow Tower	3	235.00	430.00	185.00	\$ Price Per Person		
					Double	Single	Extra Nights
	7	485.00	940.00	375.00			

Extra Nights 65.00 130.00 49.00

Kauai Puka Pak 3 Days/2 Nights

From \$96 per person double

If you're looking for an unspoiled paradise of rustling palms, sparkling sand beaches, azure seas, and an unhurried pace, the Garden Isle—Kauai—is for you. There's sport fishing, swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving. Golf, tennis, riding, hiking and exploring. Sample it all with this modestly priced package.

Package Includes:

- 2 nights accommodations in Kauai at the hotel selected
- Choice of either:
 - A) Round-trip transfers from airport and hotel and Wailua River/Fern Grotto tour
 - OR
 - B) Use of Tropical Rent-A-Car for 48 hours with unlimited mileage
- Porterage for two pieces of luggage per person including gratuities
- 4% Hawaii State Tax

3 days/2 Nights—Effective 1/1-12/17/85

ITAA*AKPP2

Hotel/Room Category	\$ Price Per Person		
	Sightseeing	Double Car	Single Car
Kauai Surf (Standard)	96.00	87.00	169.00
(Superior)	114.00	110.00	203.00
Coco Palms (Superior)	110.00	116.00	196.00
(Deluxe)	121.00	127.00	217.00
The Waiohai (Standard)	140.00	134.00	244.00
		52.00	267.00
			104.00

Extra Night rate does not include car. If desired add \$14.15 per car per night.

• Triple and Children's rates available on request.

See page 3 for Fine Print.

6. An extra night in a deluxe suite at the Coco Palms Hotel, based on double occupancy, costs

- A. \$86.32
- B. \$36.40
- C. \$72.80
- D. \$43.16

7. Which of the following is not included in both packages?

- A. Rental car
- B. Traditional Hawaiian lei greeting
- C. Hawaiian state tax
- D. Round trip transfers between airport and hotel

III. Read “Jamie” and answer questions 8 and 9.

JAMIE

When Jamie was sixteen,
Suddenly he was deaf. There were no songs,
No voices any more.
He walked about stunned by the terrible silence.
5 Kicking a stick, rapping his knuckles on doors,
He felt a spell of silence all about him,
So loud it made a whirring in his ears.
People moved mouths without a sound escaping:
He shuddered at the straining of their throats.
10 And suddenly he watched them with suspicion,
Wondering if they were talking of his faults,
Were pitying him or seeing him with scorn.
He dived into their eyes and dragged up sneers,
And sauntering the streets, imagined laughter behind him.
15 Working at odd jobs, ploughing, picking potatoes,
Chopping trees in the lumber woods in winter,
He became accustomed to an aimless and lonely labor.
He was solitary and unloquacious as a stone,
And silence grew over him like moss on an old stump.
20 But sometimes, going to town,
He was sore with the hunger for company among the people,
And, getting drunk, would shout at them for friendship,
Laughing aloud in the streets.
He returned to the woods,
25 And dreaming at night of a shining cowboy heaven
Where guns crashed through his deafness, woke morose,
And chopped the necks of pine trees in his anger.

Elizabeth Brewster

8. Jamie was “stunned by the terrible silence” (line 4) because he

- A. was born deaf and yearned to hear
- B. did know what it was like to hear
- C. had seen people watching him with suspicion
- D. did not know if people were laughing and talking about him

9. Which line **best suggests that Jamie needs a friend?**

- A. “He became accustomed to an aimless and lonely labor”
- B. “And, getting drunk, would shout at them for friendship”
- C. “He was sore with the hunger for company among the people”
- D. “dreaming at night of a shining cowboy heaven”

IV. Read “Abby Hoffman” and answer questions 10 to 12.

ABBY HOFFMAN (1947-)

Abby Hoffman’s parents encouraged her in sports from an early age. They did not believe in separate activities for girls and boys. Hoffman participated in a wide variety of sports, such as hiking, swimming, baseball and hockey.

In fact, as Ab Hoffman she played in the Little Toronto Hockey League. It was newly

5 formed and Hoffman waited in a line of thousands of kids to register for a team. She always wore her hockey equipment to the rink and her hair was short, so no one suspected that her birth certificate read “Abigail Golda Hoffman.” When she made the all-star team, a check of the birth certificate to confirm her age revealed that Ab was really a girl! No one could believe it. Much publicity followed. The story made Time magazine and was in
10 newspapers all across Canada. Hoffman played for the remainder of the season in spite of the commotion. There was one difference—she now had her own dressing room. The following year she was not permitted to join the boys’ league and she refused to play in a new girls’ league.

At age 10, Hoffman entered competitive swimming. She trained extremely hard to

15 become Ontario’s champion in backstroke and breaststroke. Good swimmers usually have a short, muscular build. Hoffman, however, grew tall and thin. On her coach’s advice she decided to try track and field where her height would be an advantage.

Hoffman began training rigorously. She ran alone every morning and at night trained with members of the Toronto Olympic Club. It has been estimated that she trained about

20 12 times per week. She rarely missed a practice. During 15 years of international competition, Hoffman won many awards including a gold medal in the 1966 Commonwealth Games. In 1981, Hoffman was appointed Director of Sport Canada, a government agency dealing with amateur sport in Canada. She believes that all Canadians should be fit and that all Canadian students should have equal opportunity to participate in
25 sports. Often, less money is spent on equipment for females. According to Hoffman, females need encouragement to be more actively involved in sports. She has never believed that girls should be on the sidelines. She certainly never was.

from the *Women of Canada Kit*, Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario

10. The phrase “in spite of” (line 10) means

- A. because of
- B. along with
- C. as a result of
- D. even though

11. The statement that expresses an opinion is

- A. “a check of the birth certificate to confirm her age revealed that Ab was really a girl”
- B. “At age 10, Hoffman entered competitive swimming”
- C. “In 1981, Hoffman was appointed Director of Sport Canada”
- D. “Often, less money is spent on equipment for females”

12. A word that **best** describes Abby Hoffman’s **dominant** personality trait is

- A. deceitful
- B. demanding
- C. docile
- D. determined

Key and Descriptors for Sample Reading Questions

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard	Examples of Assessment Standard*
1	C	Narrative/poetic	Main Ideas/Details	interpret mood by attending to format cues	A
2	C	Narrative/poetic	Organization of Ideas	infer author's intent, through style	A
3	D	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information presented	E
4	B	Narrative/poetic	Associating Meaning	identify connotation of words beyond their literal meaning	A
5	D	Narrative/poetic	Organization of Ideas	understand author's choice of form	A
6	D	Informational	Main Ideas/Details	use headings to assist reading	E
7	B	Informational	Main Ideas/Details	focus on key details in a passage	A
8	B	Narrative/poetic	Organization of Ideas	recognize cause-and-effect relationships	E
9	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information	A
10	D	Informational	Associating Meaning	identify meaning of a phrase from its context	A
11	D	Informational	Organization of Ideas	understand author's choice of form	A
12	D	Informational	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information	E

*A—Students meeting the acceptable standard should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

E—In addition to answering the questions identified for the acceptable standard, students meeting the standard of excellence should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified.

Part B: Reading Grade 9 Language Arts Achievement Test

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to construct meaning by attending to and interpreting ideas/details related to format cues and character (actions, motives, and values), setting, events, and conflict.	4	6	10	15
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to demonstrate an understanding of literary forms as well as an understanding of the relationship of the author's intention and point of view in a reading selection to the choice of form and writing style and to organizational methods such as chronological order, cause/effect, comparison/contrast foreshadowing, and flashback.	6	9	15	25
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of figurative language.	8	12	20	30
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from an entire reading selection.	8	12	20	30
Total Number of Questions	26	39	65	100
Percent of Test	40	60	100	100

Suggestions for Students

We hope that teachers will share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

I strongly advocate preparing children to understand tests and testing through extensive class discussion about the makeup of the test and how to take it, and then adequate practice to find out their own particular weaknesses in approaching tests.

—Graves, p. 183

Have students do the sample questions included in this bulletin. Then have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1991, the Student Evaluation Branch published a document entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses on the 1990 Language Arts Achievement Test. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guide given in this bulletin. Students can be taught to effectively use the guide when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Plan their available time carefully. We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. Students will have two hours to complete the assignment.

Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignment asks them to do. The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignment is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignment helps them to focus on what is expected.

Plan their writing using the pages provided. Choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try:

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

Use their reference materials. They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. Use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about. Ensure that they spell words correctly by looking them up. Use a thesaurus carefully. It can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing. Students should be careful not to overuse the thesaurus.

Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing:

- awareness of audience
(appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft. Double space if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material using the strategy that works best for them:

- a. Read the selection and think carefully about it before they attempt any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection; or
- b. Read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer.

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

Make sure they consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but in visual form such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

Take the time to re-read the lines that are referred to in the question. Many questions contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to re-read the lines that are referenced and to consider the meanings of these lines in their immediate context and in the context of the selection as a whole.

When answering “best answer” questions, be sure to read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will always include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems, such as **best, most strongly, or most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

Credits

Walter Van Tilburg Clark, from *The Portable Phonograph*. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Elizabeth Brewster. "Jamie" from Alberta Heritage Learning Resources Project.

"Abby Hoffman" from *Women of Canada Kit*. Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario.

Donald H. Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1991), p. 183.

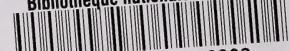
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